

# **How to Cite Right and Avoid Plagiarism, Without Tears**

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# How to cite right and avoid plagiarism, without tears

This booklet was inspired by David Gardner's "Plagiarism and How To Avoid It" which is published at <http://ec.hku.hk/plagiarism/>. Mr Gardner's work is adapted here with permission.

## Introduction

### What is plagiarism?

Plagiarism is the use of someone else's words or ideas without due attribution or acknowledgement, an attempt to pass off those words or ideas as your own.

There are two elements to plagiarism: copying someone else's words or ideas without saying whose words or ideas they are, and the attempt to deceive by pretending these are your own words or ideas. Trouble is, if you do use someone else's words and don't admit that these are not your own words, then the assumption must be that you did it deliberately, that you know this is wrong, and that therefore you are attempting to deceive.

The idea of words and ideas covers all kinds of material, including print and written material, spoken material, sounds, pictures, designs.

It does not matter if the original is hundreds of years old, or written just yesterday. It does not matter whether the original is printed, on the internet, on television, in an art gallery or a concert hall. It does not matter whether you use just a small piece of the original, or all of it. It does not matter if the work is unpublished, such as your brother's homework from last year, or your grandfather's diary.

If the words or ideas belong to someone else, then you must pay for the right to use them. Mostly it's simple: all you have to do is say who wrote or created the original piece, and where it can be found. Sometimes it's a little more complicated: you must ask for permission to use the material; this is especially true if you intend to publish your work in any way, by submitting it to a magazine, for instance, or posting it on the internet. Usually authors are only too pleased to give permission, relieved that someone has found and likes their work and wants to use it. One day when you are famous in whatever field you end up in, you'll feel pleased when other people use your material – and say where they got it from!

### Plagiarism

Plagiarism is theft. It is stealing someone else's work and saying that it is your own. It is fraud, because you are trying to deceive other people into thinking these are your own words and ideas. It can be a serious business. If you are suspended for plagiarism at Robert College then a note is made in your records, and this could stop you getting into university, could ruin your chances of a good job. Universities around the world often expel students found guilty of plagiarism. In the world of business and entertainment, people have been sued huge amounts for plagiarising someone else's work, and the sums rise into millions of dollars.

## **Avoiding plagiarism**

The thing is, it is okay to copy – as long as you cite your source, say where you got your words or ideas from. There are special ways of showing that you have copied from someone else, and one section of this booklet will show you some of these ways.

It is worth doing as well. As well as being the honest thing to do, it is a way of saying thank you to the person whose original work you are using. It shows your teacher that you have been doing your homework, looking at what other people have said on this topic. It strengthens your arguments, shows that you are not alone in thinking as you do.

**It is okay to copy -  
As long as you cite the source.**

### **Another thought:**

When you use download MP3 music, or copy an audio-cassette,  
You don't say "Hey, listen to me sing/ play those drums."  
You happily admit that it's Nirvana or Britney Spears or whoever.  
It's the same with other people's words, pictures, thoughts and so on.  
You might be free to copy them, but they are not yours, you can't claim, "This is me!"  
(In fact, you gain by pointing to the original artist, singer, writer.)

## How to avoid plagiarizing

### Quotation

There are two ways of using someone else's material. You can quote what they say, copy their words exactly as written or spoken, or you can put their ideas into your own words. If you quote, you usually put quotation marks around their words, so the reader can see this is what they actually said. If the quotation is fairly long, longer than five lines, then instead of using quotation marks you should indent the quotation in a separate paragraph. If you use your own words to express someone else's ideas, you don't use quotation marks.

(Generally speaking, you should not use too much of other people's material. Use other people's words as a springboard for your own ideas, or to support your arguments. Your teachers want to hear what *you* think, what *you* have to say, not what other people have already said. But when you do use another person's thoughts and words, don't forget to say whose work it is!)

You can introduce the quotation with the name of the author, or you can show the author's name in a note at the end. This shows the name at the start of the quotation.

One of the myths of the internet is that you can find anything simply by typing a few keywords into a search box. Royce declares, "Many people, too many people, seem to think that anything and everything is available on the web". In my experience, most people go on believing this even when their searches continually fail to discover the information they seek.

Here is the same piece, with the name noted at the end of the quotation.

One of the myths of the internet is that you can find anything simply by typing a few keywords into a search box. It seems that "Many people, too many people, seem to think that anything and everything is available on the web" (Royce). In my experience, most people go on believing this even when their searches continually fail to discover the information they seek.

Now see how it is done when your quotation is longer. There are no quotation marks around the indented paragraph; the fact that it is indented shows that it is a quotation.

Noting that some people see the World Wide Web as a giant encyclopedia, Royce notes that encyclopedias have editorial teams who make sure that the authors of the articles are experts in their field, to be sure that the articles are correct and up-to-date, and to check that they cover all angles of the subject of the encyclopedia. He declares:

There is no editorial team behind the internet. Anyone can publish anything. There is a lot of good stuff there, but it is not comprehensive, and much of the information is inaccurate, out-of-date, lacking authority, biased, intentionally or unintentionally misleading. It may be there, it may not be there. It may be good, it may not be good, and if it's good it may be available only to subscribers, protected against those who have not paid their dues.

(Royce, 1999)

There are huge holes in the web and we must not forget it!

## Paraphrase

Paraphrasing is what you do when you put what someone else has said into your own words. They aren't your ideas, even if they are your own words, so you still need to cite whose ideas these are! This is one of the most difficult aspects of research and plagiarism avoidance.

We have already seen paraphrase in use, in the previous section.

Noting that some people see the World Wide Web as a giant encyclopedia, Royce points out that encyclopedias have editorial teams who make sure that the authors of the articles are experts in their field, they make sure that the articles are correct and up-to-date, and they check that the articles cover all angles of the subject of the encyclopedia.

So that you can see what has happened, here is the original piece of writing, as found at <http://vm.robcol.k12.tr/~jroyce/lies.htm>

Many people, too many people, seem to think that anything and everything is available on the web. Scientists at the NEC Research Institute recently suggested that the Web can be seen as a searchable 15-billion-word encyclopedia (Lawrence).

But the web is not an encyclopedia, of any size. An encyclopedia aims to say something about everything. An editorial team tries to ensure that what is included in an encyclopedia is comprehensive, is accurate, is authoritative, up-to-date, representative.

Some ideas in the original passage were omitted, and there is some rearrangement and re-wording. Most importantly, the name of the original author is clearly shown.

## Citation

When we cite our sources, we do several things.

- We say “Thank you” to the person whose words or ideas we are using.
- We support our own ideas, by showing that an expert or someone famous supports what we are saying.
- We show that we have done our homework, by looking at what other people have said about our subject.
- We make it possible for anyone who wishes to find and look at the original piece we are using. <sup>1</sup>
- We build upon what other people have said and thought, producing something of our own.

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<sup>1</sup> In the real world, this is not to check for plagiarism or for accuracy of citation. Sometimes a line of thought just has to be followed up. I have myself found inspiration following up works cited in footnotes or bibliographies. Many of the ideas for this booklet came after I followed up a reference to David Gardner's booklet. And just to make doubly sure I was not plagiarizing or breaking copyright, I wrote to him for permission to compile and use this booklet.

Then again, sometimes it is so much easier to find a copy of the original passage, rather than attempt a complicated bibliographical note, bla bla bla, quoted in: da-doo-da-dum....

And sometimes, just occasionally, the original author has been misquoted or misinterpreted, and you need to go back to the source to find what really was said. See Joe Best's story, taken from *Damned lies and statistics* at <http://www.ucpress.edu/books/pages/9358/9358.intro.html>.

You may notice that not everybody cites their sources. This is especially true in journalism, where sources may not want their names revealed, or in the tabloid press which has been known on occasion to make up their stories. An article may appear in print claiming that such-and-such is true, but without saying how the reporter knows, where he got his facts from – in which case it is fair to be suspicious of the truth of the statement.<sup>2</sup> Much depends on the audience, and the purpose of the piece. Serious books and journals always cite sources. In school, it is good practice always to cite your sources whether asked to or not.

## Showing opinion

That last point is important. New knowledge and original work don't happen when we use other people's words and ideas; they come when we use them, add our own words and ideas, and so come up with something new.

In many essays, we start with a thesis statement: this is what my essay is about, this is what I intend to prove. We strengthen our arguments by wisely choosing the quotations and the paraphrases which support them. We can also show the weakness of opposing arguments in the quotations and the paraphrases we use.

Careful choice of our reporting verbs can show how we are using these thoughts from other people: "Graham affirms ...", for instance, has a much stronger sound to it than "Graham thinks ...", while "Graham says ..." has a neutral tone.

But such subtleties are not enough. Usually you should show your own thoughts on the subject very clearly. Make your comments as you go along, show how the quotations and paraphrases add to your argument. And at the end, make it clear: what is YOUR opinion, what have YOU decided, based on the evidence you have brought forward?

## The bibliography

As noted, one reason for citing your sources is so that interested readers can follow up the sources you used to read further into the subject.

Most schools and universities, and often the departments within them, require bibliographies and citations to be made in a particular way. They may well publish a Style Guide, examples of the way they want these things done. This is to ensure consistency, to make sure all the elements they require are included, and in a way that the reader will know which part of the citation is what. Several style guides are very widely used, notably MLA (published by the Modern Language Association), APA (published by the American Psychology Association) and Turabian / University of Chicago Press.

The style guide used at Robert College is based on MLA style. You will find it at several places on the school web site, including <<http://www.robcol.k12.tr/library/homeworkhelp/citerite.htm>>.

Basic information includes:

The name/s of the author/s.

The title of the work (if taken from a journal, include also the name of the journal; if included in someone else's work, include details of the collection).

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<sup>2</sup> The saying goes, "Never let the truth get in the way of a good story". I would like to cite the source but nobody seems to know who first said it: just try a Google search!

The publisher and date of publication.  
If found on the internet, other details including the URL may also be needed.  
Other information may be required.

## Self test

To see how well you have understand the ideas in this booklet, here is a self-test. You don't have to do it, of course, but if you have problems quoting and citing, the comments at the end may help you understand where and why you go wrong.

First read the two articles, by John Brown and Murphy Cottway.

Then look at each of the five student texts, comparing with the two source texts. For each student text:

- Decide if there is any plagiarism
- Work out just what is wrong (or right) with the piece
- Think how the piece could be improved
- When you have considered all five pieces, check your comments with those at the end.

# Raising Gourmet Readers

John Brown

*Sunday Sketch*, 31 March 2000, page B37.

Kids love fast food. Given a choice, many children will choose a cheese burger, fries and coke to a meal of trout and new boiled potatoes, and a glass of milk. Macdonalds and Burger Kings and Pizza Huts and Dominos proliferate, not just in this country but around the world. The world thrives on fast food, despite warnings that fast food is junk food, is not nutritious and may be harmful. In large doses, junk food can affect a child's behavior and ruin his or her health. It can be fattening. High salt and sugar contents can cause problems in later life.

Fortunately few parents allow their children to eat junk food and only junk food. They insist that "proper" food is eaten as well. Wise parents allow their children to eat junk food as a special treat, a very occasional event.

What has this to do with reading? A lot. Kids love junk books. The Harry Potter series has broken all records for children's book sales. Before that, there were crazes for Goosebumps, for the various Sweet Valley series, for the Babysitters Club series, for Choose Your Own Adventure books, for the Hardy Boys and Nancy Drew, for the Secret Seven and the Famous Five. New fads come but old fads often linger on, attracting queues at check out desks in shops and in libraries.

Such books are junk because they have little literary merit. They are easily read because there is no meat to them, no thought is necessary to engage the imagination. The tales are unlikely and repetitive, one Sweet Valley High title is indistinguishable from the next, just as one pizza is indistinguishable from the next. Children who read these books cannot grow as readers for there is no nutrition there, nothing for the imagination to work on.

Some teachers and librarians argue that it does not matter what a child reads as long as the child is reading. The claim is made that children will grow out of their fads, will develop taste and discrimination, will grow to read and appreciate the great masters of literature. If this really was true, then books by Dickens and Melville and James and Tolstoy would be popular, in libraries and in shops, as ever more children grow old enough to appreciate them.

Not so. The masters remain a minority taste. Many children's and teenage books deal with 'real' problems: one-parent families, race issues, drugs and AIDS, sex and sexuality. Children don't need to read about these problems. The books put ideas in children's minds, they titillate without enlightening. They may be popular but they are not worth while.

We cannot rely on chance alone. Children must be brought to the masters, and this cannot happen soon enough. As soon as a child has learned *how* to read, thoughts of *what* to read should come next. Schools should teach only the best books. If children want to read Goosebumps then they should buy their own copies. It's easy enough: bookstore shelves and supermarket shelves are full of junk books because junk books sell. It is far more difficult for children to find the Brontes or Hemingway or Shakespeare in the supermarket. If schools do not teach these writers, children may never come across them or be taught to appreciate them.

In the same way, libraries should stock only the best books by the best authors. Libraries are always complaining that they don't have enough money to spend on new book purchases. If money is so precious, then it should be reserved for what is worthwhile, what will feed readers' minds. Again, children who want junk reading will find it readily enough outside school and library. They do not have to search far. But if quality literature is not available in the library, then children will not find it at all.



## Hooked On Books: Catching and Keeping Lifelong Readers.

Murphy Cottway

*Education Today*, January 1999, pages 25-26.

Krashen's survey of research into reading (1993) shows that readers become readers by reading, they practise and improve reading skills when they enjoy what they are reading. We read for information, and we read to learn, we use reading for a great many things, but we practise and improve our reading skills by reading for pleasure.

For many people, children and adult, reading is hard work. They do not enjoy it, so they do not practise it and they do not improve. "In the classroom, too many of our children too quickly come to associate books and reading with workbooks, tests, and homework," says Trelease (1984). "Reading? That's work, not fun,' they will tell you." Myers (1990) says, "Reading is hard work. Hard work, moreover, which by most pupils is not seen as directly rewarding in examination terms."

The act of reading will be less like work if children are given plenty of practice in reading; they will make the most of their practicing if they feel they are getting somewhere, if they enjoy what they read. So we need to provide them with books that will interest them, books they will enjoy. There is a problem. What they enjoy is not always what adults, teacher or parent, would prefer them to read. Bates (1990) notes "a lack of correlation between what we think they should be reading, and what they are actually reading." An acid test is what children will buy with their own money, given free choice. When Bates compared the choice of The Times' children's books experts with Books for Students' record of sales through schools bookshops, she found that only seven titles coincided.

I do not see any cause for concern here. Rather than worry about what books children buy, I rejoice that, given free choice of how to spend their money, many children choose to spend it on books. It is cause for celebration. It's one up to the parents and the teachers and the librarians, one up to all those who are helping children to get hooked on books.

Bates refers to a seminar attended by librarians, teachers and others: almost everyone owned up to having enjoyed Blyton. Biggles, Just William and The Chalet School were other warmly remembered favourites. Other adults, especially those from other cultures, will remember their own favourites. The evidence suggests that readers need to go through a formula and series fiction stage. For many, the series stage will be brief. For others it stretches over many years. Some may never get beyond it. Do we have the right to deny them an avenue of pleasure or escape which will serve them through life? Many non-readers give up reading because they are made to feel guilty about the standards or the quality of the reading which they can and do enjoy.

The problem is that formula fiction is not critically accepted as good fiction. It is often shallow. The characters are often caricatures and stereotypes. The plots are unreal. The settings could be anywhere. This could be, as Ray (1982) suggests, one of the reasons why Blyton's adventure and other stories were popular with a world-wide audience, still are popular. There is so little detail that any reader can easily identify with at least

one of the characters, can imagine the story as taking place somewhere they know.

Many readers never really grow out of the series stage. But there is no evidence to show that, if they are denied series books, children are freed to become lifelong readers. If anything, research suggests that if they are denied this step in their reading development, children are denied one of those elements which go towards making a lifelong reader. They are less likely to make it.

Ohanian (1981) writes passionately: "If you're going to cultivate readers, you'll need a ready supply of joke books, almanacs, fairy tales, poetry, fiction old and new, and nonfiction. You'll need easy books, hard books, sad books, happy books. And then, most important of all, you'll need to give children the time and space to explore these books. They must have the freedom to reject, to say Yuck. They need the freedom to read Rumpelstiltskin 16 times."

We must accept the fact that not everyone is going to reach the highest pinnacles of literary taste and judgement. If you claim to read only good literature, you are very much in the minority: in Britain it is estimated that 1% of men and 4% of women read good literature exclusively. (Tucker, 1982). The danger of the quality camp is that they perpetuate their eliteness by denying many children all pleasure from reading. They turn children against reading. They are in part responsible for the aliterate, the people who can read but who do not. They would deny children access to books that they enjoy.

This is not to suggest that we need teach the junk in our English classes, nor that we make only the junk available. Like anyone else, teachers and librarians cannot enthuse about what they do not enjoy. Teachers should continue to teach from texts they think good and that they think their classes will enjoy. They can teach taste and discernment. But they should not deny the child the right to read in his own time what the child enjoys, nor make the child feel inferior for his choice. Stibbs (1973) states, "A teacher's responsibility is to provide a lot of material, not to determine taste."

Our concern is to get kids hooked on books, because reading enables learning, and because reading is an end in itself. The good reader, the child who reads 'difficult' or 'good' books, will become more developed more quickly, in terms of vocabulary, grammar, comprehension and other learning skills. The not-quite-so-good reader will not gain quite as much. And the non-reader will find learning very difficult altogether. Taste and discernment will come, for those who want it to. Whether it comes or not, there is a lifetime's pleasure to be gained from a reading habit.

### References:

Bates, Sue. What makes a good book? *Child Education*, June 1990, 34-35.

Krashen, Stephen. *The power of reading : insights from the* continued over the page.

## Student Essay One:

### **It is better to read nothing at all than to read poor quality literature. Discuss.**

Reading is a good thing. Reading enables learning. The child who reads 'difficult' or 'good' books develops more quickly, in terms of vocabulary, grammar, comprehension and other learning skills, while the non-reader finds learning difficult. We improve our reading skills when we read for pleasure.

Not everyone finds pleasure in reading. For them, reading is like medicine – however nasty it is at the time, it is good for you. But reading is hard work. It is not seen as directly rewarding in examination terms.

The question is, should children read just anything they want to? Formula fiction is not critically accepted as good fiction. It is often shallow. The characters are often caricatures and stereotypes. The plots are unreal. There is very little detail. Many readers never really grow out of the series stage.

Series books and formula fiction can be compared with junk food. Children love junk food and children love junk books. The Harry Potter series has broken all records for children's book sales. Before that, there were crazes for Goosebumps, for the various Sweet Valley series, and for the Babysitters Club series. These books attract big queues at check out desks in shops and in libraries.

Such books are junk because they have little literary merit. They are easily read because there is no meat to them, no thought is necessary to engage the imagination. The tales are unlikely and repetitive, one Sweet Valley High title is indistinguishable from the next, just as one pizza is indistinguishable from the next. Children who read these books cannot grow as readers for there is no nutrition there, nothing for the imagination to work on.

Some teachers and librarians argue that it does not matter what a child reads as long as the child is reading. The claim is made that children will grow out of their fads, will develop taste and discrimination, will grow to read and appreciate the great masters of literature. If this really was true, then books by Dickens and Melville and James and Tolstoy would be popular, in libraries and in shops, as ever more children grow old enough to appreciate them.

This is not so. The masters remain a minority taste. In Britain it is estimated that 1% of men and 4% of women read good literature exclusively.

We cannot rely on chance alone. Children must be brought to the masters, and this cannot happen soon enough. As soon as a child has learned *how* to read, thoughts of *what* to read should come next. Schools should teach only the best books. If children want to read Goosebumps then they should buy their own copies. It's easy enough: bookstore shelves and supermarket shelves are full of junk books because junk books sell. It is far more difficult for children to find the Brontes or Hemingway or Shakespeare in the supermarket. If schools do not teach these writers, children may never come across them or be taught to appreciate them.

In the same way, libraries should stock only the best books by the best authors. Libraries are always complaining that they don't have enough money to spend on new book purchases. If money is so precious, then it should be reserved for what is worthwhile, what will feed readers' minds. Again, children who want junk reading will find it readily enough outside school and library. They do not have to search far. But if quality literature is not available in the library, then children will not find it at all.

Is there plagiarism here?

If yes, what exactly is wrong? How can the piece be improved?

Other comments:

## Student Essay Two:

### **It is better to read nothing at all than to read poor quality literature. Discuss.**

Murphy Cottway says that reading is a good thing. Reading enables learning. The child who reads 'difficult' or 'good' books develops more quickly, in terms of vocabulary, grammar, comprehension and other learning skills, while the non-reader finds learning difficult. He says that we improve our reading skills when we read for pleasure.

Not everyone finds pleasure in reading. For them, reading is like medicine – however nasty it is at the time, it is good for you. Myers says that reading is hard work and is not seen as directly rewarding in examination terms.

The question is, should children read just anything they want to? Cottway says that formula fiction is not critically accepted as good fiction. It is often shallow. The characters are often caricatures and stereotypes. The plots are unreal. There is very little detail. Many readers never really grow out of the series stage.

John Brown says that series books and formula fiction can be compared with junk food. Children love junk food and children love junk books. The Harry Potter series has broken all records for children's book sales. Before that, there were crazes for Goosebumps, for the various Sweet Valley series, and for the Babysitters Club series. These books attract big queues at check out desks in shops and in libraries.

Brown says that such books are junk because they have little literary merit. They are easily read because there is no meat to them, no thought is necessary to engage the imagination. The tales are unlikely and repetitive, one Sweet Valley High title is indistinguishable from the next, just as one pizza is indistinguishable from the next. Children who read these books cannot grow as readers for there is no nutrition there, nothing for the imagination to work on.

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He also says that, in the same way, libraries should stock only the best books by the best authors. Libraries are always complaining that they don't have enough money to spend on new book purchases. If money is so precious, then it should be reserved for what is worthwhile, what will feed readers' minds. Again, children who want junk reading will find it readily enough outside school and library. They do not have to search far. But if quality literature is not available in the library, then children will not find it at all.

### **Bibliography.**

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Cottway, Murphy. "Hooked On Books: Catching and Keeping Lifelong Readers." *Education Today*, January 1999, pages 25-26.

Is there plagiarism here?

If yes, what exactly is wrong? How can the piece be improved?

Other comments:

### Student Essay Three:

#### **It is better to read nothing at all than to read poor quality literature. Discuss.**

Murphy Cottway says that reading is a good thing. Reading enables learning. Children who read difficult books develop more quickly in their language and learning skills than non-readers, who find learning difficult. Cottway mentions Krashen, who says that readers improve their reading skills when they enjoy what they are reading, so they read more so they enjoy more so they read more.

Not everyone finds pleasure in reading, and for them, reading is like medicine: it may be good for you, but it is still nasty! Myers says that for these people, reading is hard work which is not directly tested in examinations.

The question is, should children read just anything they want to? Cottway says that formula fiction is not regarded as good fiction. The stories are unreal, and the characters are often very obvious. There is little detail. Cottway says, "Many readers never really grow out of the series stage."

John Brown compares series books and formula fiction with junk food. Children love junk food and children love junk books. Brown says that the Harry Potter series are record-breaking best sellers, but before this the Goosebumps was very popular, as were the various Sweet Valley series and the Babysitters Club series. These books still attract big queues in shops and libraries.

Brown says, "Such books are junk because they have little literary merit. They are easily read because there is no meat to them, no thought is necessary to engage the imagination. The tales are unlikely and repetitive, one Sweet Valley High title is indistinguishable from the next, just as one pizza is indistinguishable from the next. Children who read these books cannot grow as readers for there is no nutrition there, nothing for the imagination to work on."

Brown notes that some librarians and teachers say all is well as long as the child reads something. They claim that children will outgrow these books and will become more demanding readers, that they will find and love the classics. If this was true, says Brown, then books by great authors would really be very popular, in shops and in libraries.

They aren't. Few people read good literature. Cottway says that in Britain about 1% of men and 4% of women read good literature and nothing else.

Brown says that we cannot rely on children finding the classics by themselves. He says that children should be introduced to the classics at an early stage of school. As soon as they have learned how to read, they must be given good books. He says that schools should teach only good quality books, and that if children really want to read Goosebumps then they must buy them for themselves. He says that bookstores and supermarkets are full of junk books because they sell well. Supermarkets do not stock authors like the Brontes or Hemingway or Shakespeare. So if schools do not teach these writers, children may never come across them or be taught to appreciate them.

He also says that libraries too should stock only the best books by the best authors. Libraries are always complaining that they don't have enough money to spend on new book purchases. If money is so precious, then it should be reserved for what is worthwhile. As Brown says, children who want junk books will find them outside the school and the library. If quality literature is not available in the library, then children will not find it at all.

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Tucker, Nicholas. *The child and the book : a psychological and literary exploration*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press, 1982. Quoted in Murphy Cottway. "Hooked On Books: Catching and Keeping Lifelong Readers." *Education Today*, January 1999, pages 25-26.

Is there plagiarism here?

If yes, what exactly is wrong? How can the piece be improved?

Other comments:

## Student Essay Four:

### **It is better to read nothing at all than to read poor quality literature. Discuss.**

Is it better to read nothing at all than to read poor quality books? I totally disagree.

Two articles, by Murphy Cottway and John Brown, provide contrasting viewpoints.

Brown notes that a poor diet can be bad for one's health. He compares junk food with junk books, and suggests that children who read only "junk" books are starved and deprived in the same way as children who eat only junk food. He says that children who read only junk books will never develop, and will never read the great works of literature.

On the other hand, Cottway says that most readers do not read good literature and only good literature. He cites Tucker who noted that as few as four in every hundred British women read good literature and nothing else; the figure is even less with men, just one in every hundred.

Would those numbers increase if children, and adults, were unable or even forbidden to read poor quality books, and were able to read only quality literature? Brown believes this would happen. He says, "Children must be brought to the masters, and this cannot happen soon enough. As soon as a child has learned *how* to read, thoughts of *what* to read should come next. Schools should teach only the best books ... If schools do not teach these writers, children may never come across them or be taught to appreciate them."

Cottway says that reading is essential in daily life, and that we get to become better readers by reading. He says that enjoyment is very important: those who enjoy reading will read more and will learn more. It is a cyclic argument, which he sums up: "We read for information, and we read to learn, we use reading for a great many things, but we practise and improve our reading skills by reading for pleasure."

From this, it follows that it does not matter what one reads, as long as the reader enjoys reading. Cottway offers several examples. He mentions Bates, who attended a seminar in which most present had enjoyed series books as written by Blyton, Johns, Crompton and others. Series reading may even be an essential part of reader development. He says, "Many non-readers give up reading because they are made to feel guilty about the standards or the quality of the reading which they can and do enjoy."

What is poor quality literature? Cottway notes that the story lines in formula fiction are not deep, that the characters are often stereotypical, and the plots very unlikely. Brown agrees: they are easily read and do not make us use our imagination. Brown also argues against books which deal with "real" problems: one-parent families, race issues, drugs and AIDS, sex and sexuality (because they) put ideas in children's minds".

Cottway argues that poor quality junk is better than nothing. He emphasises enjoyment. He quotes Ohanian, who suggested that growing readers need to read anything and everything. She says, "They must have the freedom to reject, to say Yuck". Brown makes the point that a constant diet of junk food is bad for you.

Cottway's concluding remarks suggest that our language skills develop as we read, and according to the level of the books we read; a teacher who says that children should not be allowed to read books they enjoy will not just kill any love for reading that the child might have - that teacher will also make it more difficult for the child to develop essential language and learning skills.

#### **Bibliography.**

Bates, Sue. What makes a good book? *Child Education*, June 1990, 34-35. Quoted in Murphy Cottway. "Hooked On Books: Catching and Keeping Lifelong Readers." *Education Today*, January 1999, pages 25-26.

Brown, John. "Raising Gourmet Readers." *Sunday Sketch*, 31 March 2000, page B37.

Cottway, Murphy. "Hooked On Books: Catching and Keeping Lifelong Readers." *Education Today*, January 1999, pages 25-26.

Myers, Alan. Reading in the problem years : some strategies. *The School Librarian*, Vol 31, 4, December 1983. 328-331. Quoted in Murphy Cottway. "Hooked On Books: Catching and Keeping Lifelong Readers." *Education Today*, January 1999, pages 25-26.

Ohanian, Susan. Smuggling reading into the reading program. *Learning*, November 1981. 44-47. Quoted in Murphy Cottway. "Hooked On Books: Catching and Keeping Lifelong Readers." *Education Today*, January 1999, pages 25-26.

Tucker, Nicholas. *The child and the book : a psychological and literary exploration*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press, 1982. Quoted in Murphy Cottway. "Hooked On Books: Catching and Keeping Lifelong Readers." *Education Today*, January 1999, pages 25-26.

Is there plagiarism here?

If yes, what exactly is wrong? How can the piece be improved?

Other comments:



## Student Essay Five:

### It is better to read nothing at all than to read poor quality literature. Discuss.

Is it better to read nothing at all than to read poor quality books? I totally disagree.

Two articles, by Murphy Cottway and John Brown, provide contrasting viewpoints.

Brown points out that a poor diet can be bad for one's health; he compares junk food with junk books. He suggests that children who read only "junk" books are starved and deprived in the same way as children who eat only junk food. He says that children who read only junk books will never develop, and will never read the great works of literature.

On the other hand, Cottway argues that most readers do not read good literature *and only good literature*. He cites Tucker who noted that as few as four in every hundred British women read good literature and nothing else; the figure is even less with men, just one in every hundred.

Would those numbers increase if children, and adults, were unable or even forbidden to read poor quality books, and were able to read only quality literature? Brown believes this would happen; in his words, "Children must be brought to the masters, and this cannot happen soon enough. As soon as a child has learned *how* to read, thoughts of *what* to read should come next. Schools should teach only the best books ... If schools do not teach these writers, children may never come across them or be taught to appreciate them."

Cottway's argument is that reading is essential in daily life, and that we become better readers by reading. He believes that enjoyment is very important: those who enjoy reading will read more and will learn more. It is a cyclic argument, which he sums up: "We read for information, and we read to learn, we use reading for a great many things, but we practise and improve our reading skills by reading for pleasure."

From this, it follows that it does not matter what one reads, as long as the reader enjoys reading. Cottway offers several examples to prove his point. He mentions Bates, who attended a seminar in which most present had enjoyed series books as written by Blyton, Johns, Crompton and others. Series reading may even be an essential part of reader development. He declares, "Many non-readers give up reading because they are made to feel guilty about the standards or the quality of the reading which they can and do enjoy." If true, it is a terrible indictment against those who would persuade us to read nothing rather than poor quality literature.

This leads me to wonder how one decides what poor quality literature is. With some books it may be very clear. Cottway notes that the story lines in formula fiction are not deep, that the characters are often stereotypical, and the plots very unlikely. Brown agrees: they are easily read and do not make us use our imagination. But there is a huge divide between the Junk and Great Literature, and Brown would seem to want to deny us the pleasure of discovering it for ourselves. Further, he argues against books dealing with "real" problems: one-parent families, race issues, drugs and AIDS, sex and sexuality" on the grounds that they "put ideas in children's minds". I have to say, I thought that one of the purposes of literature *is* to put thoughts into readers' minds.

Against this, Cottway argues that even poor quality junk is better than nothing. His emphasis is on enjoyment. He quotes Ohanian, who suggested that growing readers need to read anything and everything. She says, "They must have the freedom to reject, to say Yuck", and I believe this is very important. After all, if you do not try the bad stuff as well as the good, how will you know what is bad and what is good? How will you develop taste? This goes for food as well as for literature. Brown makes the point that a constant diet of junk food is bad for you, but surely it could be that a constant diet of gourmet food could be equally as bad? You need to try everything to know what you like, and some foods you like a lot and some foods you like occasionally. The same with books.

The teacher's job should be to help children learn what is good literature and why it is good, but a teacher who says that children should not be allowed to read books they enjoy because they are not good literature will kill any love for reading. What is worse, Cottway's concluding remarks suggest that our language skills develop as we read, and according to the level of the books we read. So a teacher who says that children should not be allowed to read books they enjoy will not *just* kill any love for reading that the child might have; that teacher will also make it more difficult for the child to develop essential language and learning skills.

It is a convincing argument. It seems to me that it is far, far better to allow people to read anything at all of whatever quality, than to insist that they read *only* good literature and nothing else at all.

## Bibliography.

Bates, Sue. What makes a good book? *Child Education*, June 1990, 34-35. Quoted in Murphy Cottway. "Hooked On Books: Catching and Keeping Lifelong Readers." *Education Today*, January 1999, pages 25-26.

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Myers, Alan. Reading in the problem years : some strategies. *The School Librarian*, Vol 31, 4, December 1983. 328-331. Quoted in Murphy Cottway. "Hooked On Books: Catching and Keeping Lifelong Readers." *Education Today*, January 1999, pages 25-26.

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Is there plagiarism here?

If yes, what exactly is wrong? How can the piece be improved?

Other comments:

## Comments on the Essays

## Essay One

[illegible]

This is out and out plagiarism. There is hardly anything here which the writer has not lifted directly from the original passages, and most of the “original” words are based on ideas in the two articles.

There is not a single quotation mark, and not a single citation.

This student would fail on this. If a repeat offence, this would merit a Discipline Committee hearing. At university level, this could get the student expelled.

## Essay Two

[illegible]

Not a lot better. Although each “lifting” is accompanied by a citation of the original author, this is still word-for-word copying, without quotation marks. Note at one point where a lift from Brown is attributed to Cottway (Cottway says this is not so ... minority taste.)

Once again, the few original words are still based on other people's ideas.

This student deserves an F; if lucky, the student might get a chance to write this properly for a slightly higher grade.

## Essay Three

[illegible]

Almost there. The writer has attributed each source as used, and has put direct quotation in quotation marks. There are a couple of lapses towards the end, direct lifts which should be in quotation marks.

However, most of the rest of the essay is pure paraphrase, sometimes very close to the original. There is very little which has been added by the writer, little to explain the points s/he is making, no new thoughts or building on the evidence used. There is little connectivity, to help the flow from one side of the argument to the other.

The writer comes to no conclusion, does not say what s/he thinks. This is simply a discussion of the two articles, with no added input from the writer.

This essay won't fail, but it does not deserve high marks. A C (average) grade would be a fair assessment, and some teachers might think even this is generous.

## **Essay Four**

This is much better. The quotations are clearly shown, the paraphrasing uses more “own words” than does essay three.

There is effort to explain why the quotations and the paraphrases have been selected; the writer is trying to knit the two source documents together and make something new. Linking is generally good (“On the other hand...”, “From this, it follows...”), although there are a few unlinked remarks; the last sentence of the second-last paragraph cries out for a connection to what was said immediately before.

There is some attempt to come to a conclusion, but apart from this and the opening paragraph there is little to show what the writer really thinks.

This effort deserves a good mark, but not a top grade.

## **Essay Five**

This is better still.

The writer comments on the quotations and paraphrases (for example, “If true, it is a terrible indictment against those who would persuade us to read nothing rather than poor quality literature” and “I have to say, I thought that one of the purposes of literature *is* to put thoughts into readers’ minds.”) and it is clear where the writer stands. The writer uses the evidence to build something new.

The conclusion, the writer’s own opinion, is clearly stated.

This is not a perfect piece of work. It is heavily reliant on just the two sources and ideally would have used more sources. (Of course, this exercise would have been more difficult with extra source material.) It is far the best of the five and does deserve a top grade.

## **Comment on the Self Test**

You will probably have realised that I wrote all five student essays.

You may also want to know that I wrote the two source articles, “Hooked On Books: Catching and Keeping Lifelong Readers”, and “Raising Gourmet Readers”. The Hooked On Books article is adapted from a piece I wrote for the Monthly Newsletter of the International School Hamburg (and posted on my personal web site at <http://vm.robcol.k12.tr/~jroyce/read6.htm>); the quotations and references are genuine.

The views expressed in the “Raising Gourmet Readers” are held, though not by me.

## Appendix

Extract from “Where the truth lies” by John Royce, first published in *School Librarian*, 47 (3), Autumn 1999. The full article can also be found at <<http://vm.robcol.k12.tr/~jroyce/lies.htm>>

The internet and the World Wide Web are big, bigger than we can imagine. There is a lot of information there, and every day there is more and more. Many people, too many people, seem to think that anything and everything is available on the web. Scientists at the NEC Research Institute recently suggested that the Web can be seen as a searchable 15-billion-word encyclopedia (Lawrence).

But the web is not an encyclopedia, of any size. An encyclopedia aims to say something about everything. An editorial team tries to ensure that what is included in an encyclopedia is comprehensive, is accurate, is authoritative, up-to-date, representative.

There is no editorial team behind the internet. Anyone can publish anything. There is a lot of good stuff there, but it is not comprehensive, and much of the information is inaccurate, out-of-date, lacking authority, biased, intentionally or unintentionally misleading. It may be there, it may not be there. It may be good, it may not be good, and if it's good it may be available only to subscribers, protected against those who have not paid their dues.

When information is found on the web, there may be no clue as to who wrote it and what their credentials are, we may have no idea how complete or accurate or up-to-date or free from bias the information.

To counter this, we teach evaluation techniques to our students. We want them to think about what they read, to check their sources, to get second opinions. It isn't always easy.



